

State of Minnesota Citizen Participation Plan

Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development

2012-2016

Introduction

In 1994, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued new rules consolidating the planning, application, reporting and citizen participation processes of four formula grant programs: Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Home Investment Partnerships (HOME), Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA). The new single-planning process was intended to more comprehensively fulfill three basic goals: to provide decent housing, to provide a suitable living environment and to expand economic opportunities.

Provision of decent housing may involve assisting homeless persons in obtaining appropriate housing, retaining the affordable housing stock, increasing the availability of permanent affordable housing for low-income households without discrimination or increasing supportive housing to assist persons with special needs. Providing a suitable living environment might entail improving the safety and livability of neighborhoods, including the provision of adequate public facilities; deconcentrating housing opportunities and revitalizing neighborhoods; restoring and preserving natural and physical features with historic, architectural, and aesthetic value; and conserving energy resources. Expanding economic opportunities can involve creation of accessible jobs, providing access resources for community development, and assisting low-income persons in achieving self-sufficiency.

The Consolidated Plan is actually a three-part planning process required by HUD. It comprises developing a five-year strategic plan, preparing annual action plans and submitting annual performance reports. These three parts are intended to furnish the framework whereby Minnesota can identify its housing, homeless, community, and economic development needs, identify resources that will be tapped and actions to be taken that will address the needs, as well as look back and evaluate the State's progress toward achieving its strategic goals. Completing these documents on time and in a manner that is acceptable to HUD ensures program funding.

The precursor to the Consolidated Plan is the Citizen Participation Plan (CPP). The objectives of the CPP are to ensure that the citizens of Minnesota, particularly persons of low and moderate income, persons living in slum and blight areas, units of local government, housing agencies and other interested parties, are provided with the opportunity to participate in the planning and preparation of the Consolidated Plan, including amendments to the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Performance Report. In doing so, the CPP sets forth general policies and procedures for implementing and carrying out the Consolidated Planning Process, such as how the Consolidated Plan will be developed, dates and milestones along which the process will proceed, and methods for citizens to offer the State assistance and guidance in the formulation of the Plan. Furthermore, the provisions of the CPP fulfill statutory and regulatory requirements for citizen participation specified in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's rules for the Consolidated Plan, the HOME, CDBG, ESG and HOPWA programs. In Minnesota, the participation process will be developed and monitored by a Consolidated Plan Coordinating Committee consisting of representatives from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA), and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

Purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan

In order to ensure maximum participation in the Consolidated Plan process among all populations and needs groups, and in order to ensure that their issues and concerns are adequately addressed, the State of Minnesota will follow the standards set forth in this Citizen Participation Plan during development of its Consolidated Plan.

The Citizen Participation Plan also provides citizens an opportunity to evaluate and comment on the State's performance, as reported in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

Relevant Areas

The term "entitlement areas" refers to cities and counties that qualify to receive one or more formula grants. These areas must complete a Consolidated Plan separately from the State's to receive funding. For purposes of this Citizen Participation Plan, "non-entitlement" refers to cities and towns that do not file Consolidated Plans individually or as part of a consortium and are not eligible to receive formula funding from HUD directly. Entitlement areas include: the cities of Bloomington, Coon Rapids, Duluth, Eden Prairie, Mankato, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, Fargo/Moorhead, North Mankato, Plymouth, Rochester, St. Cloud, St. Paul, Woodbury, and the counties of Hennepin, Anoka, Dakota, Ramsey, Washington, St. Louis, Cook, Koochiching, Lake and Itasca. Individuals wishing to contribute to the Consolidated Planning process in these areas should contact housing and community development specialists in these cities/counties.

Encouraging Citizen Involvement

Public Notice and Outreach

An informed citizenry is critical to effective and responsive housing and community development programs. Efforts to educate residents and empower participation are an ongoing element of the Consolidated Planning process.

As the fundamental means of notifying interested citizens about the Consolidated Plan and related activities, such as the Annual Action Plan or the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report, the State will utilize display advertisement notices in one or more newspapers of general circulation. Such notices will be published at least 14 calendar days prior to public hearings. All notices will be written in plain, simple language and direct efforts will be undertaken to publish and/or post information at locations that will elicit maximum low- and moderate-income and minority participation.

Public education and outreach will be facilitated through the use of public advertisements that describe the Consolidated Planning process, opportunities for citizen participation and available funding through the CDBG, ESG, HOME and HOPWA programs. The State's Consolidated Plan mailing list will likely include social service organizations, local jurisdictions, low-income housing consumers, neighborhood groups, previous participants and commentators, and others expected to desire input on the Plan.

The Consolidated Plan will offer many other opportunities for citizen participation. The State will particularly encourage participation of persons with special needs and/or persons who are often underrepresented in public process (low-income, persons of color, non-English speaking

persons, persons with disabilities, persons who are homeless). The State will also encourage the participation of statewide and regional institutions and organizations that are involved or affected by the formula grants in the process of developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan. Participation will be solicited and encouraged through the following activities.

Public Hearings and Input Meetings

At least two public input meetings will be held before the publication of the final Consolidated Plan. The primary purpose of the first public hearing is to gather citizen input on housing and community development needs and the proposed Consolidated Plan before it is published for comment. The second public hearing will be held during the Consolidated Plan 30-day public comment period and will be for review and comment on the Consolidated Plan draft. The public hearings will be announced at least two weeks prior to being held. Announcements may be made through the DEED and MHFA websites and at least one newspaper of statewide circulation.

The public hearings will take place in locations identified in the announcement of the public hearings that are accessible to persons with disabilities. The dates, times and locations for public hearings will be convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries. Non-English speaking persons and those with disabilities will be encouraged to attend. Where a significant number of non-English speaking residents are expected to participate, the State will provide translators when notified of this need prior to the public meetings. Contact information will be provided in all public announcements

Regional and Interest Area Forums and Focus Groups

In addition to the public hearings, DEED, MHFA, and DHS may solicit input on housing and community development issues and needs of the homeless population at regional or interest area forums or focus groups.

If these types of meetings are conducted, agencies, advocates, statewide and regional institution and organizations and community residents will be informed of the meetings through state agency websites, personal contact, media releases, and other methods that the state believes may be productive. All sites selected for the forums or focus groups will be accessible to the physically disabled. The State will work with advocacy groups to determine the need for special accommodations (beyond physical accessibility) of special needs groups and non-English speaking attendees.

The forums will be conducted with the intention of providing Minnesota residents the opportunity to voice their opinions and provide insight into the issues prevalent in their communities. The forums will also provide an opportunity for citizens and interested parties to obtain information about state housing and community development programs, the administering agencies, and funding requirements.

Publication of Consolidated Plan Documents

The State will publish its draft Consolidated Plan documents for public review in a manner that affords citizens, public agencies and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents and submit comments.

The draft Consolidated Plan documents will be available at selected depositories for the full public comment period. A list of the depositories where we expect the Consolidated Plan to be available appears at the end of the Citizen Participation Plan. The draft Consolidated Plan documents will also be available for viewing on MHFA's website (<http://www.mnhousing.gov>) and DEED's website <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com>, or DHS' website <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us>. Although interested parties will be encouraged to use the depositories' copies or view the Consolidated Plan on the Internet, a reasonable number of hard copies of the proposed Consolidated Plan will also be available from DEED and MHFA during the public comment period.

Citizens or groups that have attended any of the forums or public hearings will be notified by mail or e-mail of the Consolidated Plan's availability for comment.

The draft Consolidated Plan will describe the amount of assistance the State expects to receive and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income and the plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced.

The State will openly consider any comments of individuals or groups received verbally or in writing, including e-mail, during the Consolidated Planning process or at public hearings. A summary of the written and public hearing comments will be included in the final Consolidated Plan, along with the state's response to the comments.

Public Comment on the Consolidated Plan Documents

Prior to the adoption of the Consolidated Plan, the state will make available to interested parties the draft Consolidated Plan and Executive Summary for a comment period of no less than 30 days. Notification of the availability of the proposed Consolidated Plan will appear in at least one newspaper that is circulated throughout the state.

Before the State submits a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) to HUD, the State will make available to interested parties the proposed CAPER for a comment period of no less than 15 days. Citizens will be notified of the CAPER's availability through newspaper notification.

The CAPER will be available on MHFA's and DEED's websites for the full public comment period. Hard copies of the CAPER will be available upon request from DEED and MHFA during the public comment period. The State will consider any comments of individuals or groups received verbally at public hearings or in writing, including e-mails. A summary of the written and public hearing comments and the State's responses will be included in the final CAPER.

Public Access to Records

The State will provide all interested parties with access to information and records related to the State's Consolidated Plan and the State's use of assistance under all programs covered by the Consolidated Plan during the preceding five years. The public will be provided with reasonable access to housing assistance records, subject to laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality.

Consultation with Organizations and State Agencies

When preparing the Consolidated Plan, the State will actively consult with public and private agencies that provide housing, health and social services in order to ensure that the interests and needs of all groups are being adequately addressed. This consultation may occur through regional and interest area forums, interviews conducted with such organizations (especially those that provide services to special needs populations), surveys, and incorporation of data and reports produced by such organizations into the Consolidated Plan.

Amendments to the Consolidated Plan

Pursuant to HUD regulations, an amendment to the Consolidated Plan is required whenever the jurisdiction determines to:

- Substantially change the allocation priorities or its method of distributing HUD formula grant funds;
- Utilize formula grant funds (including program income) to carry out an activity not previously described in the action plan; or
- Change the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity.

Such changes, prior to their implementation, are reviewed under various federal or State requirements. Substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan are, in addition, subject to a formal citizen participation process. Notice and the opportunity to comment will be given to citizens through public notices in local newspapers and other appropriate means, such as direct mail or public meetings. A public comment period of not less than 30 days will be provided prior to implementing any substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan. State staff will prepare a summary of all comments received in writing and, in cases where any citizens' views are not accepted, provide reasons for the decision. This documentation will be attached to the substantial amendment, which will be available to the public and submitted to HUD.

Substantial Amendments

Occasionally, public comments or events warrant an amendment to the Consolidated Plan. The criteria for whether to amend are referred to by HUD as Substantial Amendment Criteria. The following is the State's Substantial Amendment Criterion

A change in the described method of distributing funds to local governments or nonprofit organization subrecipients to carry out activities. Elements of a "method of distribution" are:

- A. Application process for subrecipients;
- B. Criteria for selecting subrecipients.

Citizen Participation in the Event of a Substantial Amendment

In the event of a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan, the State will comply with the following citizen participation process:

1. The State will notify citizens of the availability of the draft substantial amendments, a minimum 30-day comment period, and, if in the State's judgment a public hearing is

desirable, the time and location of the public hearing through a newspaper of statewide circulation.

2. Depending on which of the formula grant programs is affected, the substantially amended sections of the Consolidated Plan will be made available on either MHFA's website(<http://www.mnhousing.gov>), DEED's website, <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/> or DHS' website, <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us> and hard copies will also be available from the affected state department for the full duration of the public comment period.

Consideration of Public Comments on the Substantially Amended Plan.

In the event of substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, the State will openly consider any comments on the substantially amended Consolidated Plan from individuals or groups. Comments must be received in writing, including e-mail, or at public hearings if hearings are conducted. A summary of the comments received on the substantial amendments will be included in the final substantially amended Consolidated Plan. Also included in the final substantially amended Consolidated Plan will be a summary of all comments not accepted and their reasons for dismissal.

Changes in Federal Funding Level

Any changes in federal funding level after the Consolidated Plan's draft comment period has expired and the resulting effect on the distribution of funds will not be considered an amendment or a substantial amendment.

Standard Amendments

"Standard amendments" are those that are not considered substantial in nature and pertain chiefly to minor administrative modifications of the programs. Thus they do not require in-depth citizen participation.

Complaints and Grievances

Citizens, administering agencies and other interested parties may submit complaints regarding violations of this Citizen Participation Plan or federal regulations regarding the preparation of the consolidated plan, amendments to the consolidated plan, or performance reports.

Citizens may also present complaints and grievances orally or in writing at the community meetings and/or public hearing. All public comments, including complaints and grievances, made either orally or in writing within the 30-day public comment period, will be included in the final Consolidated Plan, subject to such limitations of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act that may apply. Such complaints or grievances shall be directed to the Consolidated Plan representative, Ms. Christine Schieber of DEED at 332 Minnesota St, Ste. E200, St. Paul, MN 55101, or her successor.

Timely Response to Complaints or Grievances

Within 15 calendar days of receiving the complaint, the program manager shall discuss the matter with the department manager, respond to the complainant in writing, and maintain a copy of all related correspondence, which will be subject to State review. A copy of the State's response from the Consolidated Plan representative will be transmitted, concurrently, to the complainant and to the DEED Director. If, due to unusual circumstances, the Consolidated Plan representative finds that it is unable to meet the prescribed time limit, the limit may be extended by written notice to the complainant. The Consolidated Plan representative's notice must include the reason for the extension and the date on which a response is expected to be generated, which may be based on the nature and complexity of the complaint.

Public review materials and performance reports will include data, as appropriate under confidentiality regulations, on any written complaints received and how each was resolved.

Citizen Participation Requirements for Local Governments Receiving CDBG (Small Cities Development Program) Funds from the State

Units of general local government must provide for and encourage citizen participation as prescribed at 24 CFR 570.486. All Small Cities Program applicants for CDBG funds are required to provide citizen notification and involvement in planning and implementation of the proposed projects through one or more public hearings and other informational efforts. Public hearings must be held at times and in places that are convenient to all community residents, particularly those who will be affected by implementation of the project(s). The needs of persons with disabilities and non-English speaking persons should be considered for the dissemination of information and the location of public hearings and meetings must be accessible to persons with disabilities. In addition, applicants are required to conduct a community development survey to allow for citizen input on the housing and community needs of the jurisdiction.

Availability of the Citizen Participation Plan

Copies of the CPP may be obtained by contacting the MHFA website (<http://www.mnhousing.gov>) or the DEED website at <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com>, or DHS' website, <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us>. Upon request, the State will make the Plan available in an alternative format accessible to persons with disabilities.

Depositories

Libraries

Arrowhead Library System, 5528 Emerald Ave, Mount Iron
Bemidji Public Library, 509 American Avenue NW Bemidji
Duluth Public Library, 520 West Superior Street, Duluth
East Central Regional Library, 244 South Birch, Cambridge
Grand Marais Public Library, Post Office Box 280, Grand Marais
Great River Regional Library, 1300 West St. Germain, St. Cloud
Lake Agassiz Regional Library, Post Office Box 900, Moorhead
Marshall-Lyon County Library, 201 C Street, Marshall
Minneapolis Public Library, 250 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis
Minnesota Valley Regional Library, 100 E. Main Street, Mankato
Nobles County Library, Post Office Box 99, Worthington

Northwest Regional Library, 210 Labree Avenue North, Thief River Falls
Owatonna/Steele County Library, 105 North Elm Avenue, Owatonna
Red Wing Public Library, 225 East Avenue, Red Wing
Rochester Public Library, 101 Second Street SE, Rochester
St. Paul Public Library, 90 West 4th Street, St. Paul
Willmar Public Library System, 410 SW. 5th Street, Willmar
Winona Public Library, 151 West 5th Street Winona

Regional Development Commissions

Arrowhead RDC, 221 West 1st, Duluth
East Central RDC, 100 South Park Street, Mora
Headwaters RDC, P.O. Box 906, Bemidji
Metro Council, 390 North Robert Street St. Paul
Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, 333 West Sixth Street, Suite 2, Willmar
Northwest RDC, 115 S. Main Ave., Ste. 1, Warren
Region Five Development Commission , 611 Iowa Avenue, Staples
Region Nine Development Commission, P.O. Box 3367, Mankato
South West RDC, 2401 Broadway Ave., Ste. 1, Slayton
Upper Minnesota Valley RDC, 323 West Schlieman, Appleton

Housing Partnership's Regional Network Project Offices

Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, 810 W. St. Germain, Ste. 303, St. Cloud
Minnesota Housing Partnership, 1821 University Ave Suite 137, St. Paul
Southeast Minnesota Housing Network, 1414 North Star Drive, Zumbrota
Southwestern MN Housing Partnership, 2401 Broadway Avenue, Ste. 4, Slayton
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, P.O. Box 607, Crookston
West Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, 1500 North Union Avenue, Fergus Falls

Minnesota Initiative Offices

Initiative Fund, 405 First Street SE, Little Falls
Northland Foundation, 202 West Superior, Ste. 610, Duluth
Northwest MN Initiative Fund, 722 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, 525 Florence Avenue , Box 695, Owatonna
Southwest MN Foundation, 15 3rd Avenue NW, Hutchinson
West Central MN Initiative Fund, 1000 Western Avenue, Fergus Falls

Councils, Associations, and Other Locations

American Indian Housing Group, 1508 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis
Asian Pacific Minnesotans, 658 Cedar Street, 1st Floor., St. Paul
Central Cultural Chicano, 1915 Chicago Ave. S., Minneapolis
CLUES, 220 S. Robert St., Ste. 103, St. Paul
Council on Black Minnesotans, 2233 University Ave., Wright Building, Suite 426, St. Paul
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, 122 West Franklin, Ste. 5, Minneapolis
Chicano Latino Affairs Council, 555 Park St., Ste. 210, St. Paul
Upper Midwest American Indian Center, 1912 Emerson Ave. N., Minneapolis
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, 702 3rd Avenue S., Virginia
MICAH, 122 West Franklin Avenue, Suite 310, Minneapolis